EXPOCAD®

40 Years of EXPOCAD®: A not-so-brief History

- **When/where did Expocad start?**
  The corporate entity that owns EXPOCAD®, ACT, Inc., was started in 1986. One plastics engineer, Paul Ososky (deceased), started the company, quickly followed by his brother, a process engineer, Mike Ososky (now President, CTO, retired), and a synthetic fuels researcher, Rich Stone (now CEO). EXPOCAD® didn't come along until Mike's brother, Peter Ososky, a programmer, started. He programmed the first automated booth drawing commands for SME (Construction Specifications Institute, Jack Atherton). In 1988, we did our first tradeshow at Reed's National Design and Engineering Show at McCormick Place in Chicago. We did the show to build our brand and to generate new business. We attended the on-site space assignment at NDES, also observed the interaction between Freeman floor planners and their customers, and said, "There has to be a better way." We continued to run our successful engineering software business until we spun it off in 1999 to become EXPOCAD® exclusively.

- **What were those early days like?**
  Like any startup, life was not easy. Frugal was an understatement. Spending was at a minimum, and so were salaries. Our engineering software business was financing the R&D effort for EXPOCAD®. We were selling products to the world's largest corporations. We became one of the largest AutoCAD resellers in the world. Life steadily improved.

  Our first product demonstration of EXPOCAD® was at NAEM annual meeting (now IAEE Expo! Expo!). We told them we had a new electronic floor plan sales & operations tool. We would do the presentation if they paid for the data projector. It was expensive. It took 3 people all day to get the projector to work. It was the size of a large suitcase and required an extensive setup procedure. We did the demonstration as an educational session for a standing-room-only crowd using beta software that was barely functional. We left the session with a stack of business cards that couldn't be held in one hand. Although we already had positive feedback from Freeman, SME, and CSI, the NAEM session served as validation of our efforts.

  That same year, SME did the first-ever on-site electronic space assignment for AutoFact in Detroit. It was the perfect technology to present to the exhibitors. We ran our first ad in Expo Magazine in 1989. We took hundreds of phone calls on a ¼-page color ad. We worked with virtually every large show organizer, and we still do.

- **How many employees?**
  We keep our staff to under 25 in the US.

- **What has changed most & what has stayed the same?**
  The biggest change is the drop in price of technology 1 MB of memory used to be $1000. In today's world, that would make an average cell phone about $1.6 million. A little pricey. What has stayed the same is the dynamics of the tradeshow industry. It still is the most stressful job you can have! Love it!

- **Has the office moved?**
  Yes. Though we have moved 4 times, all the locations are very close to each other. We started in a closet where the receptionist would answer the phone with your company name, even though there were many startups in the building. It was only big enough for 2 people. If one had to leave the office, the other had to walk out into the hall to let them out. A year later, we moved to a larger office about 0.5 miles away, which only lasted a year before we moved to an even larger office in the same building. A couple of years later, we bought a 12,000-sq.-ft. building just a few blocks away. We have been in this building for over 30 years.

- **What are some memorable or funny moments over the years?**
  There have been several movies filmed in Aurora, IL, over the years. The movie 'The Express' (a movie about Ernie Davis, the 1st black player to earn the Heisman Trophy), they turned our first floor into a 50's era A & P Food Mart. The movie 'Wayne's World' (proud intellectual distinction) had a blue AMC Pacer with flames painted on the side being chased by a camera car up and down the street. BTW – there are no palm trees in Aurora! When presenting our mobile device tools, Having an organizer tell us that "why on earth would someone want an interactive, searchable floor plan on a handheld device?" (1999)

- **ESCA is the BESCA**
  Our first ESCA meeting was in 1996. We had a small kiosk exhibit. Freeman and Hoffend (now Freeman) were already using EXPOCAD. It was time to extend our marketing. We are used by a significant number of ESCA members and we continue to support ESCA by exhibiting and participating in every event we can.

- **What are some major milestones (positive or challenging ones)?**
  We have had many firsts: 1st event tech company (Windows OS), 1st graphical database, 1st electronic floor plan tool for exhibitions, 1st on-site / on-line space selection, 2nd largest one day ecommerce transaction (At the time 1st was Dell, 3rd was Amazon) 1st online interactive floor plan, 1st mobile platform interactive searchable floor plan, 1st on-site interactive kiosk, 1st variable pricing/yield management floor plan tool.

- **Any particular specialties you're known for?**
  Innovation. Honest. EXPOCAD® technology powers almost <u>every</u> event with exhibits in North American even our competition.

Leading us up to today:

- **What has driven the growth of the company?**
  Being first, innovative, connected (organizer, general service providers, venue, exhibitor, attendee), broad product line, global support network, large installed base.

- **Any well-known clients you want to mention?**
  General service providers – all the largest including Freeman, GES. We support 8000 events yearly, largest events on 4 continents. Reed, Informa, GSMA, for profits. CES, AEM not for profit.

- **To what do you attribute your company's longevity?**
  Our customers and staff. They are amazing.

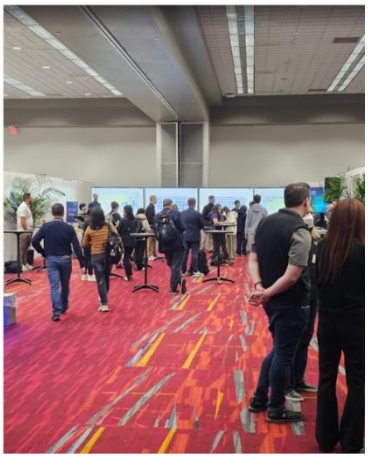
On Site Space Assignment: Circa 1998



Space assignment 2016:



Space assignment 2026:



EXPOCAD® Logo over the years:

1989

EXPO CAD

COMPUTER AIDED
FLOOR SPACE MANAGEMENT

1991

EXPOCAD

1993

EXPOCAD

1996

EXPOCAD®

2007

EXPOCAD

2012

EXPOCAD®

Our office 1st floor for the 50's era movie 'The Express' about the First black Heisman trophy winner. They turned us into an A & P Food Store! It was so cool. Old canned goods, displays, etc. When filming they had an assistant with a walkie-talkie to keep us from walking into a scene.

